

Message Text

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SUBJ: CUBAN LEASE OF AIR CANADA DC-8S

REF: OTTAWA 0075; OTTAWA 106

FOLLOWING ARTICLE BY MARK WILSON APPEARED IN VANCOUVER
PROVINCE JANUARY 9 HEADLINED "AIR CANADA COULD FACE JET
ROW":

BEGIN QUOTE: AIR CANADA MAY BE RISKING A MAJOR INTER-
NATIONAL ROW BY LEASING TWO MCDONNELL DOUGLAS DC-8 AIRLINERS
TO CUBANA, THE CUBAN STATE AIRLINE WHICH HAS BEEN CARRYING
CUBAN TROOPS TO ANGOLA.

THE TWO PLANES ARE BEING LEASED FOR TWO YEARS TO PERMIT
CUBANA, WHICH IS SHORT OF LONG-RANGE EQUIPMENT, TO ENGAGE
AS A 50-50 PARTNER IN A NEW SCHEDULED SERVICE BETWEEN CANADA
AND CUBA.

THE FIRST OF THE ROLLS-ROYCE ENGINED PLANES WHICH ARE
16 YEARS OLD AND SURPLUS TO AIR CANADA'S NEEDS, WILL
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BE HANDED OVER ON FEB. 8 AND THE SECOND PLANE WILL BE

DELIVERED 20 DAYS LATER.

NO RESTRICTIONS ARE BEING PLACED ON HOW THE PLANES ARE USED AND CUBANA COULD CONCEIVABLY USE THEM ON FLIGHTS TO ANGOLA.

CUBA HAS SEVERAL THOUSAND TROOPS FIGHTING ALONGSIDE THE RUSSIAN BACKED MPLA MOVEMENT WHICH IS BATTLING TWO WESTERN SUPPORTED FACTIONS FOR CONTROL OF THE FORMER PORTUGUESE WEST AFRICAN COLONY.

CUBANA HAS FLOWN SOME OF THE 7500 CUBAN SOLDIERS REPORTEDLY IN ANGOLA. EVEN IF THE AIRLINE DID NOT EMPLOY THE CANADIAN DC-8S ON THE CONTINUING SUPPLY SHUTTLE IN SUPPORT OF THE EXPEDITIONARY FORCE, IT COULD USE THEM ON OTHER INTERNATIONAL SERVICES TO FREE OTHER AIRCRAFT FOR SERVICE TO ANGOLA.

CUBANA RELIES ON THE RUSSIAN BUILT IL-62, A PLANE CLOSELY SIMILAR TO THE BRITISH VC-10, FOR SERVICE TO MADRID, PRAGUE AND MOSCOW. TO SUBSTITUTE DC-8S ON SERVICE TO EUROPE AND RUSSIA WOULD HAVE THE SAME EFFECT, IN EQUIPMENT TERMS, AS EMPLOYING THEM DIRECTLY ON SUPPLY RUNS TO ANGOLA.

CUBANA WILL TAKE DELIVERY OF THE DC-8S NEARLY TWO MONTHS AHEAD OF THEIR ENTRY INTO SERVICE BETWEEN HAVANA AND MONTREAL MIRABEL AIRPORT.

BUT EVEN WHEN THE AIRCRAFT START FLYING TO CANADA THIS SERVICE WILL OCCUPY THEM FOR ONLY PART OF THE WEEK, LEAVING THEM FREE FOR SEVERAL DAYS AT A TIME FOR EMPLOYMENT ON OTHER RUNS.

AIR CANADA IS TO HANDLE MAINTENANCE OF THE DC-8S AT DORVAL AIRPORT IN MONTREAL AND TRAINING IS BEING PROVIDED IN THIS COUNTRY FOR CUBANA PILOTS AND GROUND CREWMEN.

THE NEW SERVICE BETWEEN CANADA AND CUBA WILL INVOLVE AIR CANADA IN FLYING DC-8S OUT OF TORONTO (TWO DAYS OF UNCLASSIFIED

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THE WEEK) AND MONTREAL (ONE DAY OF THE WEEK) TO HAVANA STARTING IN MAY. SERVICE WAS TO HAVE STARTED EARLIER BUT WAS POSTPONED TO ALLOW EXISTING CHARTER ARRANGEMENTS TO BE WOUND UP AND FOR THE CUBANS TO COME UP WITH EQUIPMENT.

CANADA HAS OBLIGED BY SOLVING THE EQUIPMENT PROBLEM FOR THE CUBANS AND THERE IS THE POSSIBILITY OF A THIRD

AIRCRAFT, A NEWER STRETCH VERSION OF THE DC-8, MAY BE LEASED BY AIR CANADA.

AIR CANADA IS ALREADY IN THE BUSINESS OF FLYING TO CUBA, ACCEPTING REGULAR CHARTERS FROM THE TORONTO TRAVEL HOUSE OF UNITOURS (CANADA).

THIS WINTER AIR CANADA, PACIFIC WESTERN AIRLINES AND QUEBECAIR EXPECT BETWEEN THEM TO FLY SOMETHING LIKE 50,000 HOLIDAYING CANADIANS TO CUBA, THE BULK OF THEM OUT OF TORONTO.

WHEN REGULAR AIR SERVICE IS STARTED BY AIR CANADA AND CUBANA, WITH THE TWO AIRLINES SPLITTING PROFITS DOWN THE MIDDLE, SOME ASPECTS OF THE CHARTER BUSINESS WILL BE RETAINED.

THE CUBANS, LIKE THE RUSSIANS, DO NOT WELCOME VISITORS WISHING TO ARRANGE ACCOMMODATIONS ON ARRIVAL AND STAY FOR INDETERMINATE LENGTHS OF TIME.

CANADIANS CAN GO TO CUBA WITHOUT A SPECIAL VISA BUT THEY NEED TO BE PRE-BOOKED INTO A HOTEL AND HAVE A FIXED DEPARTURE DATE. INITIALLY THE AIR CANADA SCHEDULED SERVICE TO HAVANA WILL BE LIMITED TO PACKAGE TOUR PARTIES WHO HAVE BOOKED THROUGH A COOPERATING TRAVEL AGENCY - POSSIBLY UNITOURS. INTERESTINGLY, UNITORUS, WHICH HAS HELPED MAKE CANADA CUBA'S NUMBER ONE TOURIST MARKET, IS US BASED AND US CITIZENS CANNOT GO TO CUBA EXCEPT WITH THE CLEARANCE OF THE STATE DEPARTMENT. PACKAGE HOLIDAYS TO CUBA ARRANGED BY UNITOURS AND OTHERS OFFER GOOD VALUE. FOR EXAMPLE, SEVEN NIGHTS AT A BEACH HOTEL, IN A ROOM WITH A PRIVATE BATH, COSTS \$399. THIS RATE
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INCLUDES MEALS AND THE RETURN AIRFARE FROM TORONTO.

IN STARTING THE NEW SERVICE, AIR CANADA IS TO ACT AS THE AGENT HERE FOR CUBANA AND THE CUBAN AIRLINE WILL RECIPROCATATE ON ITS HOME SOIL. AS PART OF THIS ARRANGEMENT CUBANA WILL HONOR CN-AIR CANADA CREDIT CARDS, THE FIRST CREDIT CARDS TO BE ACCEPTED IN THE ISLAND FOR MANY YEARS.

WHILE HITHERTO REJECTING CREDIT CARDS THE CUBANS ALREADY ACCEPT TRAVELLERS CHEQUES ISSUED IN THE US. THE CURRENT INVOLVEMENT OF PACIFIC WESTERN AIRLINES IN ANGOLA, FLYING FOOD SUPPLIES INTO THE MINING COMMUNITY OF DUNDO, IS PRESUMABLY NOT OBJECTIONABLE TO THE US, BUT THE AMERICANS MIGHT WELL BALK AT CANADIAN

AIRCRAFT BEING USED ON TROOP OR SUPPLY DUTIES TO THE
ANGOLA CAPITAL OF LUANDA.

A SPOKESMAN FOR THE US EMBASSY IN OTTAWA SAID
THURSDAY THAT HIS COUNTRY'S STANCE IS THAT ALL FOREIGN
INTERVENORS SHOULD WITHDRAW FROM ANGOLA. HE SAID THAT
NO COMMENT IS POSSIBLE ON THE USE OF CANADIAN PLANES
IN CUBAN SERVICE TO ANGOLA UNTIL SUCH TIME AS THE
PLANES ARE EMPLOYED IN THIS WAY. END QUOTE
JOHNSON

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